

# **Community Connections**

## **Best Practices for Businesses/Agencies**

### **Getting Started**

1. Appoint an employee to serve as **school liaison director**. Typical responsibilities include employee awareness, identification of needs, volunteer recruitment, and community outreach. The director keeps employees updated on activities, school needs and company/ agency policy regarding volunteer work in middle schools.
2. Develop and communicate a clear **policy for employees**. Include policy on volunteering during working hours, and volunteering time versus volunteering money.
3. Invite **guest speakers from schools** to visit your place of work to discuss exactly what the school staff needs and how volunteers will be working.
4. Start by volunteering at one or two schools at the start. Encourage employees to car pool, share stories, and build a **culture of service** to middle school students. Starting small will also ensure success.
5. Remember to **support employees** who volunteer in schools by providing time at staff meetings or in newsletters to share their contributions. Your own employees make the best testimonials for recruiting other workers.
6. Be sure you know what **training** is required/provided by schools. If there is none, perhaps a group of volunteers can request a question-answer session with the school contact person or principal. Your school liaison director might arrange for a meeting at the school or work place.
7. Keep your eye on the prize! **The primary goal is academic progress** for middle schools students. Try to find ways to assist with homework, serve as an academic coach, and be another caring adult who will show students ways to succeed. Strong study skills are essential for all school students; middle school is a final chance to strengthen those skills.
8. Since middle school students learn best when they are involved, encourage students to **show** you what they are doing. Whether it's completing a math problem, listening to someone read, or watching a student complete a homework assignment, your careful attention to the task will be your best guide in how to proceed.
9. **Be patient**. Many students will look forward to the time with a volunteer for the structure and adult attention, but many may not show a strong appreciation at first. Continue to encourage skill development, and relationships will follow. Meanwhile, helping to strengthen reading, math, and organizational skills will increase student success and self-esteem--and may be your best investment ever.

10. **Invite students** to the work place for a special outing or to complete homework. Emphasize school skills used on the job as well as the values of attendance, responsibility, communication, and getting along with others.
11. There is **no one right recipe** for a school academic volunteer program. It must be designed and crafted to suit the school and the students. To avoid communication pitfalls, the school liaison director should check in with the school periodically for feedback.
12. Thank you for your interest in volunteering in middle schools in Wisconsin!

For more information about Community Connections, please visit  
<http://jessicadoyle.wisconsin.gov>